

[Margaret Walker]

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AMERICAN FOLK STUFF

YALLUH HAMMUH

Is ah evah telled you bout mah cousin, Yallah Hammuh? Well, man dat wuz one moah bad guy. Dat guy so bad de sharef scairt ta go nigh his house. Yalluh Hammuh do all his devilment an den go home an pretty soon de sharef cum up [clost?] ez he are off in de trees summeres wid bofe his guns drawed an he say,

“Yalluh Hammuh!”

an Yalluh Hammuh say,

“Whut?”

an de sharef say,

“Dey wants you in town,”

an Yalluh Hammuh say,

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“Aw, all right, ahll be in attuh while. Gone back down dere an tell em ahm cummin.”

Das jes his jive, but de sharef know he healthy ta fergit Yalluh Hammuhs jive.

Now dis heah town hwere Yalluh Hammuh live air a mill town. Evyting depen on de mill an de mill wattuh by powuh fum de canal. Dey drains de canal onct a week. Now you kin see hwo anybody kin git bumped off an trowed ovah in dat dere canal an aint nobody know tell de weeks ovsh an dey drains de canal. Man, youghta see de peoples cum down te watch em drain, de canal and see ef any dey kinfokes done bin bumped off in de canal, an ef not dey kin fokes, ta see whosen is an whosen aint. Tek ferninstant a man runnin an de road, pullman porter, er wukkin in de dinin cah, er any man whut wuks at night an aint often home. Well sposn anotha gennelmans cums callin on his wife when he aint home. Sposn she done tell him she aint 2 got no husman, she a widder. Say lak dis, “Ahm all bah mahsef night attuh night an ah gits so lonesome lak heah all bah mahsef.” Well, say lak her husman cum home one night at de wrong time. Say ferninstant he prove she aint no widder an she aint prove she aint lonesome, whut happen ta huh? Why, she de kinda bait de canal ketches. She de reason why dey got ta drain de canal evhy week.

Well, mos evhy week Yalluh Hammuh done bump somebody off in de canal. Whut dey do ta him? Aint ah tell ya? De sharef cum up clost ez he dare an serve notice, an ef he wanta go, he go, an ef he aint wanta go, he aint go. Dat is he aint go, tell dat time cum whin Pick-Ankle-Slim aint gin Yalluh Hammuh no choice. Now Yalluh Hammuh is a bad guy all right, but dis Pick-Ankle-Slim pose ta be a badder guy. He a bad bad guy. He so bad he real bad; bad as Stagolee.

Well now Yalluh Hammuh bin pilin san bags on de levee and he cum in town Saddy night wid a cad uv money big ezzyo two fistes put tagedder. He go on inside a lil shindig an spy him a gal; real nice lookin gal an he go ovah ta huh an ax huh ta dance an she excep. Well dey gits ta dancin, an Yalluh Hammuh git ta feelin real good. Dey waltzin on town ta town. Yalluh Hammuh treat huh an whin he sets dat bebbe up she see dat dere wad big ez yo

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two fietes put togedder an man she wall huh eyes wussenuh dyin man. But whilst dey gits ta dancin agin, in cum a long tall skinny guy dat Yalluh Hammuh aint know an evhy body git jes ez quiet you kin heah a pin fall. Den dis long tall skinny fella whut look lak he got real sloe eyes an jes kin see troo em, he call dis chick whut Yalluh Hammuh dancin wid an she aint go.

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Yalluh Hammuh keepa dancin but he in git kinda nervous on accountsa he know he got dis heah mad in his pocket. Doan be fer dat he aint worried. Dass de onliest ting whut keep him quiet. Well dis guy holluhs to de lady an he say,

“You heah me talkin ta you, you so an so an so an so,” an he finish up huh name wid a lotta lil sunday schul words, but she kinda toss huh haid off lak she aint lisnin an eban ef she is she aint ansin. Yalluh Hammuh feel lak hit be bettah do she answer.

“Honey,” say Yalluh Hamnuh, “ah aint lookin for no trouble. You bettah gone ovah dere see whut dat black bastard want.”

But she keepa dancin. She aint eben mek nary move ta quit. She jes look in his face real sweet an show all huh teefs an den she say,

“Big Boy, is you scairt uv trouble?”

An cose Yalluh Hammuh say,

“Naw, bebbe, ah aint lookin fer no trouble but ah sho Lawd aint scairt uv.....”

An bout dat time whut do dat long tall skinny fella do but pull out his gun an shoot out de lights. Lawd, dem people scrambles. Yalluh Hammuh aint know presackly whut moment hit is whin de lady leave his ahms. All he know is de rums go black an de peoples scream an scrambles. Well now Yalluh Hammuh tink de fust ting is git outa heah an de nex ting is how he gonna git out. Dis long tall skinny fella blockin de onliest way out wid his guns. Aint

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no two doahs outa dis heah shindig. You gotta go back outa de same doah whut you done cum in at an dat dere doah is de frunt doah.

Yalluh Hammuh staht bumpin roun wid de res de fokes tell he bump inta de pyanna an dat gin him a nice lil idea. He move dat pyanna out an he gits behime hit.

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Pretty soon evyting go quiet you kin heah a mouse. Yalluh Hammuh tink his time is done cum. He staht tippin out an feelin his way. He kinda useta de blackness now an he kin see aint nuttin else in his way side a big ole trunk. But be feel lak be aint bah hissef. He feel lak somebody else in dat dere [rume?]. Jes ez he gits by de trunk somebody peep ovah de othuh side. Ohoh! Down go Yalluh Hammuh behime de trunk. Den dey plays peep eye. Yalluh Hammuh peep an evhy time he peep he see dat othah fella on de othah side jes gittin tru peepin an drawin his head back in. Dey keeps dis up bout fifteen minutes an bad ez Yalluh Hammuh is de sweats pohin offa him lak he a woman whut bin beatin suds all day long. He figguh out he gotta git bad; he gotta git real bad, and he gotta git real bad fas; in fac he gotta ack his baddest. So he say,

“All right now! Cum on outa dere! Ah sees you peepin roun dat trunk! Cum on out ah say!”

An whomsesevahs peepin say in a whiny lak voice, wid his wards tremblin lak dey got de palsy,

“Yyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyeah sssssssssssssssuh”

an out cum de ownuh uv de place. Well Yallah Hammuh mek out lak he real outdone but de bones trufe is he real relieved. He ax de man who dat long tall skinny fella is an he tell him.

“Why, dat wuz Pick-Ankle-Slim!”

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Well den Yalluh Hammuh gone bout his business but de nex time dey drains de canal evhy body dere ta see who is done bin bumped. Pick-Ankle Slim is right dere an evhybody bout ta blieve he musta bump Yalluh Hammuh whin heah cum Yalluh Hammuh walkin right up ta Pick-Ankle-Slim an all de peoples cummente ta backin on back where dey kin watch Yalluh Hammuh an Pick-Ankle-Slim tusseln an wraslin 5 right dere on de edge o dat dere canal. Who beat? Yalluh Hammuh uv cose. He mah cousin an he de baddest man in town.